CIDAC
Centro de Documentação
TL 4078

Things being heard about East Timor (in Jakarta)

It is said that there is a conflict between Jusuf (Indonesia's Minister of Defence and Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief until March 1983) and Murdani (present Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces). J. has now come to the conclusion that the E.Timor question can only be solved by diplomacy. Therefore informal approaches have been made at quite senior levels for talks to be held. For instance the talks between Purwanto and Xanana. One solution considered relatively favourable is that ET should become a "Special Region". But M. does not agree. He is said to feel that if ET received greater freedom (by for instance becoming a "Special Region"), many secrets would be exposed, especially about the behaviour of the troops in ET. The President was said to be 'neutral' over what should be done.

The 15 August incident when 15 officers were killed resulted in the President agreeing to the path of strong action. But then there were rumours that the officers were killed by Indonesian soldiers in order to inflame the atmosphere. This became stronger when rumours circulated that among those killed was the President's son-in-law, Prabowo. There were reports too that the parents of one of the officers killed was given the huge sum of Rp 10 million to keep him quiet.

After this incident, a large-scale offensive was launched. Many civilians were killed because the war in ET is never frontal. Fretilin guerrillas only attack weak Indonesian positions. Thus a large-scale offensive often means murdering all the inhabitants of a suspect kampong. If necessary, the entire contents of the kampong are completely destroyed.

The church is facing tremendous difficulties in dealing with all this. The Bishop once asked to meet but got no reply. MAWI (Indonesian Bishops' Conference) and the DGI (Indonesian Council of Churches) are writing letters of condolence to the president for the killings that have taken place (mentioning date and place). In a very subtle way, the church is expressing its disapproval of the military operations now under way in ET. The reports are that M. is very unhappy about these letters. BAKIN (Joint Intelligence Agency) has tried to approach MAWI and the DGI to get them to change their attitude but without success. People say too that the Foreign Department also disagrees with the military solcution, because it only creates problems for Indonesian foreign policy.

It is interesting to know too that the operation in ET is also being called a "BAKIN operation" among professional soldiers. The soldiers who have to fight in ET do not agree with the operation, not only because the risks of being killed are great but also because they think the chances of winning the war are remote. And they feel reluctant to kill people or wipe whole villages consisting of unarmed civilians. (quite apart from whether they are Fretilin or not).

At Christmas, M went to ET, and invited religious leaders to meet him. But the priests and pastors boycotted the meeting because they knew an offensive would be launched on 2 January. It would have been difficult for them if the people heard that they were meeting M. when everyone knew that a week later there was going to be a great slaughter. M. was furious and told the BAKIN people "to tackle" the church people but this did not work. The church stuck to its stand.

MAWI and the DGI have reportedly decided to side with the East Timorese, but they are aware of the weakness of their political position. This is why they have confined themselves to making passive protest. But even this has infuriated M.

(Received from Jakarta, 21 March 1984)

Translated by :

TAPOL
8A, TREPORT STREET
LONDON SW18 2BP